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Title: The Gem of Immortality

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## PROLOGUE

Mondain: I had it, you  
know, The Gem of  
Immortality.

Bartender: Right. <wipes  
Mondain's drool off the  
bar> Want another drink?  
Mondain: <nods>

Bartender: OKAY,  
One Dragon Drool Cooler  
coming up. So, what  
happened to it?

Mondain: What?  
Bartender: The Gem of  
Immortality.

Mondain: Oh. Sorry. I am  
getting very old.  
Immortality ain't all it's  
cracked up to be. You  
won't believe this, but  
some bumbling fool of a  
Stranger dropped it.  
<chokes back tears>  
It SHATTERED!!

Bartender: There there,  
now. You got your  
immortality, didn't you?  
Let's talk of pleasanter  
things. How's the family  
doing? Your Dad ok?

Mondain: <Glares>  
What do you mean by  
that!? I DID NOT KILL  
MY FATHER!  
It's just that...  
well, the Gem of  
Immortality powered his  
Pacemaker. I merely ...  
inconvenienced him,  
maybe.  
Bartender: Of course, of  
course. Calm down now.

Why don't you tell me all  
about it?

AND SO, Mondain reveals  
how he acquired the ...

Gem Of Immortality!

MONDAIN REMEMBERS

Minax and I lived on an  
island in those days. We  
were young and in love  
and very happy,

While I busied myself  
with my research, Minax  
spent her days doing  
Minax things to small  
furry creatures.

My research centered on  
the strange lights that  
flickered offshore. They  
were very bright at  
night and sometimes, blood  
would swell up into the  
sea from beneath the  
dancing lights.

Minax discovered this  
first. I found her one  
moony night keening and  
gibbering madly on the  
beach, naked and covered  
in the blood of the sea.

Only by letting her suck  
my neck could I sooth  
her long enough to get  
her to the water trough  
and bathe her.

I determined to discover  
for myself what lay in  
those depths. And, with  
the help of my trusty  
island pigmy assistant,  
Baldric, I built a diving  
chamber.

We loaded it onto a  
small ship and we sailed  
one evening to the spot  
where the lights came  
out at night.

As those devilish lights  
began hopping about the  
surface, I crammed  
Baldric into the chamber  
and lowered him by rope  
into the bleeding sea.

Although he lacked an air  
supply, Baldric had  
confidence in my ability  
to decipher his tugs on  
the rope. The mere

frantic I ignored, but truly convulsive tugs meant his skin was turning blue and I would haul him up, much to his relief, for a wheezy debriefing.

Soon, a picture emerged of a sunken ship resting on the bottom. Before poor Baldric went into convulsions, I learned that the prow of that ship was adorned by a human skull pouring blood from its eyes!

Well, that settled it. Baldric would have to go down one more time and get that skull. Of course, I was deeply concerned about Baldric. The way he was flopping around now, he could damage that skull in retrieving it. But we scientists must take risks so, shouting my instructions, I plopped him in one last time and prayed for the skull's deliverance.

And he did it! Baldric got the skull! He was never quite right after this, but he had always been a bit twitchy to begin with. And I had the skull!

I immediately saw the key clenched in the teeth of the skull. I pried the key loose and read the inscription on its side, "Pacemaker." This key would unlock my Dad's pacemaker! I could get the Gem of Immortality that powered Dad's pacemaker! Oh! WoW! Was I excited!

And well, you know the rest of the story.